

### Academic *De-Stress*, Not *Distress*

Academia can be rewarding, but it comes with a fair amount of responsibility. This responsibility becomes more burdensome when you start to worry about how much work it is. There are several ways to avoid this trap. With patience and discipline, you can carry the weight of academic pressure with more ease.

#### *Allowing the Load to Lighten*

- When your workload increases, your level of stress tends to do the same. Get started early on your major assignments so that they are less worrisome as smaller assignments accumulate. More importantly, reward yourself for lightening your load by doing activities that relax you, and by taking some time to reflect on the work you've done.
- Be conscientious about your time commitments. Many students over commit themselves without realizing what kind of stress they are setting themselves up for. It is good to be active and involved, but allow yourself to gradually increase responsibilities instead of taking everything on at once.
- Be kind to yourself when you feel overwhelmed. Everyone faces a certain amount of adversity from the demands of academia, and some positive reinforcement to stay focused can help. If you encourage yourself instead of berating yourself or your circumstances, you may be pleasantly surprised by the ease with which you can handle pressure.

#### *Soaking in the Scenery*

- With the amount of information given in classes, it can be tough to step back and put what you have learned into a broader context. Yet, by doing this, we often retain the information more comprehensively and meaningfully. Try to learn course content in a way that you find genuinely interesting, not just something to be recalled for an exam.
- Sometimes the sun is too bright to study, or your body demands exercise before you write an essay. Be sure to keep your personal health a priority; learning should heighten, not hinder, your quality of life. Beware of procrastination, but realize how taking a break can help.
- Some of the greatest opportunities at a university arise from the simple fact that it is a vast social network. Some of the most insightful and educational experiences will come through your interactions with others, whether academic or not. Take advantage of the broader university community of which you are a part, learning from and with others.

### **Remind Yourself**

- Not all stress is negative. Certain kinds of excitement like the thrill of playing your favourite sport or connecting with new people, can help to alleviate the effects of negative stress. It is important to not only know, but also feel the difference between these kinds of stress.
- School cannot grade you on the life you lead or what kind of person you are. In the long term, the way that you're personally affected by your academic experiences will influence you more than any assessment of your academic capabilities. Don't let grades tell you what you can and cannot accomplish.
- Anxiety comes with everyone's transition into independence. School can add to this anxiety, but it can also foster the confidence to cope and succeed when you apply yourself. Believe in your capabilities, even when things don't turn out the way you expect.
- When the stress in your life becomes overwhelming, it is okay to seek support, either from those closest to you or from a professional. This may involve visiting support centers on campus such as Student Counselling Services, Disability Services for Students, and the Language Center. Also, you don't need to be having a crisis to benefit from talking to someone. Sometimes all it takes is a little bit of time around like-minded, empathetic people to help you feel better.

### **Five Ways to De-Stress Now**

- When you really need a break, take it. If you're stressed out, you won't be productive.
- Make a concerted effort to think positively, especially when facing adversity. This simple step can be surprisingly challenging, but it saves a lot of unnecessary hardship.
- Sometimes we struggle in funny ways, so laugh about it. Approaching adversity with a sense of humour deflates the burden of anxiety.
- It is futile to expect perfection, so let some of the little things slide. Attention to detail is valuable, but becomes a detriment when it makes you lose sight of the bigger picture.
- When you feel your body build up tension, take care to relax and do activities that make you feel at peace. Instead of pulling all your hair out, let all your air out.

***Live, Learn, and Let Loose!***